

**DELAWARE HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

February 9, 2005

The Honorable Thomas F. Carper
513 Hart Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

1 Christina Center
301 North Walnut Street, Suite 102L-1
Wilmington, DE 19801

Dear Senator Carper,

I am writing to thank you for your leadership in opposing Senate Bill 131, *The Clear Skies Bill of 2005*. If enacted, this legislation will weaken or eliminate many of the strong air quality protections contained in the current Clean Air Act. Additionally, Senate Bill 131 fails to address carbon dioxide emissions, a primary contributor to one of the most pressing environmental problems of our times – global warming. Full and faithful implementation of the Clean Air Act ensures deep reductions in sulfur, nitrogen, and mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants within this decade, enabling us to meet public health standards by 2010. Conversely, Senate Bill 131 delays the deadlines for meeting these standards until at least 2018, denying Delaware residents—and all Americans—healthy air to breathe. As a public health officer for our state, it is my duty to protect Delawareans from dangerous air pollutants. I believe Senate Bill 131 will severely impair my ability to accomplish that goal. I urge you to do everything in your power to see that this legislation never reaches the Senate floor.

My concern for our citizens is, in part, based on the federal government's own data. EPA's consultants estimate that fine particle pollution from power plants shortens the lives of 95 Delaware residents each year. In our state alone, pollution from power plants causes 13,106 lost work days, 87 hospitalizations and 2,256 asthma attacks every year, 99 of which are so severe they require emergency room visits.

The power plant industry ranks at or near the top of all US sources of air pollution, emitting more carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and mercury than any other source. Sadly, children are most susceptible to the detrimental effects of power plant pollution. In Delaware, 142,099 children live within 30 miles of a plant, the area in which the greatest health impacts are felt. Additionally, researchers have found that infants in areas with high levels of particulate matter pollution face a 26 percent increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and a 40 percent increased risk of respiratory death.

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We can not allow these numbers to escalate. Senate Bill 131 not only impedes the reduction of dangerous sulfur, nitrogen, and mercury emissions, but completely ignores the role of carbon dioxide in the growing problem of global warming.

Thank you for examining and addressing this very important issue. Your leadership and support in opposition of Senate Bill 131 are greatly appreciated. I look forward to discussing this matter with you further in the near future.

Sincerely,



Jaime H. Rivera, MD, FAAP
Director

pc: Vincent Meconi, Secretary, DHSS
Kate Finnerty, Governor's Office